

AMAA News

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A Word of Gratitude

Andrew Torigian



AMAA NEWS

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COVER PICTURE

Children's Summer Camp in Bekaa, Lebanon

We have just completed another successful year at the AMAA. Our faith is well founded and we shall overcome all obstacles that may arise before us, as we continue our mission.

The AMAA announced the retirement of the Rev. Peter B. Doghramji, Ph. D., our Executive Director since January of this year. Dr. Doghramji took office at a special time of need for the AMAA. Despite the brevity of Dr. Doghramji's term of office his knowledge and grasp of the Armenian Evangelical diaspora helped prioritize the AMAA's worldwide agenda. We wish Dr. Doghramji and his wife, Mary, a happy and fulfilling retirement with all its well deserved blessings.

The AMAA has in the interim appointed me to be the Acting Executive Director. I will do my best with an optimistic attitude. With the ongoing cooperation of our AMAA family, we will continue to progress in our programs in all the areas we serve.

I would like to thank the members of the AMAA Board of Directors for their support throughout the year. They not only attended and participated in the scheduled and special meetings, but also supported the AMAA with their tal-

ents and helpful advice. They are a wonderful group of individuals who give generously of their time and financial resources and we certainly appreciate them.

None of our work could have been done if it wasn't for the dedicated AMAA Staff. Even though we have two less employees than the beginning of the year, our productivity increased and our work was accomplished.

The AMAA has a terrific group of Committee Members serving on the various projects nearest their heart. We thank each and everyone for the tremendous effort they put forth on fulfilling their goals.

Once again we also want to thank our mission partners throughout the world for their hard work and faithfulness to our mission as we continue to serve in 22 countries around the world.

We praise God and thank Him as we continue to ask for His guidance in our work. We also wish to express our gratitude to the many thousands of our supporters, friends and members who help the AMAA with their wonderful generosity and stewardship.G

Inspirational Corner

A THANKSGIVING PRAYER

I do not thank Thee, Lord, that I have bread to eat while others starve;
Nor yet for work to do while empty hands solicit heaven;
Nor for a body strong while other bodies flatten beds of pain.
No, not for these do I give thanks!
But I am grateful, Lord, because my meager loaf I may divide;
And that my busy hands may move to meet another's need;
Because my doubled strength I may expend to steady one who faints.
Yea, for all these do I give thanks. Amen.

- Janie Alford

The Essential Characteristics Of The Church*

Scripture: Acts 2: 42 –47

Vahan Tootikian

The Church is a divine/human institution. It is divine because Christ is its head, which he rules through his Spirit. Its members are viewed as the people of God, and therefore as the continuation and consummation of the Old Testament covenant community. It is human because it is composed of human beings, who are finite, fallible and sinful. Thus, there are no perfect churches. The church as a human institution has its faults and foibles, sins and shortcomings.

There are some distinctive traits and characteristics, which distinguish the church as a community of the committed drawn together by their faith in Christ. They have a common destination, a common purpose, and a common commitment. Their common destination is to grow up in Christ and to become Christ-like persons. Their common purpose is to do what Christ did, to be his agents and ambassadors. Their common commitment is to their Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

The New Testament church is the model and paradigm of what the church is called to be. Acts 2: 42-47 describes those characteristics. It portrays what the church was then, and it therefore tells us what the church is called to be today. These are the essential characteristics of the church:

1. The first characteristic of the Church is Proclamation of the Gospel.

Acts 2: 42 describes the first-century church as a community who “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayer.”

“Devoted to the Apostles’ teaching.” What is the apostles’ teaching? The core of apostles’ teaching was Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior. For sinful human beings, he is the only hope. Thus, sinful human beings have to repent and accept

Christ as their Savior and Lord. The apostles addressed an appeal for repentance to their listeners and offered to the believers forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2: 38-39, 3: 25-26, 5:31, 10:43). The early church was devoted to the proclamation that God in Christ has brought salvation, and they invited people to believe in this Good News and be saved.

Christ wants His Church, you and me, to be devoted to the proclamation of the Gospel!

2. The second characteristic of the Church was communion or fellowship.

Act 2:42 states that “*they devoted themselves ... to the fellowship*”

Christianity is a religion of community. There is no such thing as “individual Christianity.” The church is like a spiritual family. Church members are the Body of Jesus Christ and, therefore, are not independent; they are dependent on Jesus Christ and they are interdependent. People who call themselves Christian and are not part of the church do not have life in the Christian sense; for without the burning fire, without the community spirit in the church, no matter how glowing they are, they are doomed to fade away and die, just as one piece of coal, separated from the other coal is doomed to extinguish and die. Spiritual life is not a game of solitaire. We cannot play it by ourselves.

A person who calls himself/herself a Christian and does not have a church is like a student without a school, a bee without a hive, a sailor without a ship. Fellowship also implies communication, human heartedness, kindness, and acceptance of others as brothers and sisters. It means as Jesus stated, “To rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.”

Christ wants his Church, you and me, to be people devoted to Christian fellowship!



3. The third characteristic of the Church is power.

Acts 2:43 reports that “*many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.*” The early Christians experienced the power of the Holy Spirit. The Church is called to be in the flow of God’s transforming power to affect change in people’s lives!

God’s presence is the presence of the Holy Spirit within us. The Holy Spirit is not only our spiritual compass which guides us toward that which is right, but He is also present to empower us to do what we know we should.

Jesus promised his followers the gift of power. He said, “*You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you*” (Acts 1:8). Christ’s gift to the disciples was the Holy Spirit. In John 20: 10-23, the Gospel writer describes how the disciples, intimidated by their enemies, were hiding behind locked doors, but when the risen Lord “breathed upon them and told them to receive the Holy Spirit, the disciples were not the same anymore. They received new power. They became bold witnesses of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is a power like the wind, unseen but penetrating and impelling. We can shield ourselves from this wind, or we can set our sails to catch it. If we set our sails to catch it, we definitely will move forward; we will become a dynamic Church.

Christ wants his Church, you and me, to be people of power!

MESSAGE

4. The fourth characteristic of the Church is Love.

Acts 2: 45-46 shows Christian love in action: “*All of them were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.*” The acid test of a Christian is love. Love is a conscious commitment. It does not just happen to us. We knowingly and willingly give ourselves to it. We are not born loving. We come into this world grasping. But most of us learn somewhere along the way to share. We learn to quit grasping and to start giving. We learn to love because someone important in our life models love for us. Jesus Christ is the greatest model of divine love, for he is love personified. It is he who said: “This is how all will know you for my disciples -- your love for one another.” The responsibility of Christians is to love others as Christ has loved mankind.

Christ, wants us his Church, you and me, to be a people of love!

5. The fifth characteristic of the Church is Worship.

Acts 2: 46 says, worship took place, “*Every day in the temple ... and in their homes.*” The worship of the early Christians was both formal and informal: in the temple and in their homes.

The worship of God is the highest act of all human beings. Christian worship is directed toward God and not toward man. God alone is worthy of adoration and absolute obedience. Knowing God in worship transforms the worshipers into His image. In turn, worshipers are drawn to each other to become equipped to obey God’s call in the world. Thus worship is more than praising, singing and praying. Worship is a life-style of enjoying God, loving Him and giving ourselves to be used for His glory and His purposes.

Christ wants us to be a worshipful people!

6. The sixth characteristic of the Church is Unity.

The early church was united. Acts 2:46 writes, “*They ate together with glad and*

sincere hearts.” The King James translation puts it as “*With singleness of heart.*” In other words, they had a strong sense of unity.

Unity does not mean sameness or uniformity. Unity does not mean that all Christians should think alike, feel alike, and act alike. No two of us are exactly alike. The early followers of Christ were not all alike. They had their differences. But, in spite of their diversities, they accepted and respected each other. They had a mutual commitment to Christ and forbore one another in love.

Christian unity means having a mutual commitment to Christ, and to strive to live and work in unity despite our differences. Christian unity means to accept, and respect each others’ differences. Christian unity is to recognize and emphasize that which we have in common – our relationship to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Christ does not expect us to agree on every detail in our theology. But as St. Augustine put it, “*To have unity in essential things, to have liberty in non-essentials, and have charity (love) in all things.*”

Christ wants His Church and His people to be united!

7. The seventh characteristic of the Church is Sincerity.

Acts 2:46 tells us that the early believers possessed “sincere hearts.” This is opposite of hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is the termite of the church. Sincere people are transparent, honest and open to each other. They can tell the truth in love.

That is not an easy thing to do, for it means true Christians tell each other where they are and how they are. To be sincere is sometimes taking a risk. It is possible to hurt someone’s feelings and endanger a friendship.

Sincerity means keeping the lines of communication open; it means honesty; it means openness.

Church members can, and should, get along with other church members, should communicate with others openly and hon-

estly, and should treat one another with indestructible good will.

Christ wants us to be sincere people!

8. The eighth characteristic of the Church is Evangelism.

Evangelism is the spread of the Christian Gospel, or the good news, by formal preaching or by personal witness. Acts 2:47 states: “*The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*” Just as worship did, evangelism also occurred “day by day.”

Those committed followers of Christ didn’t rely on their spiritual leaders to win the lost from the pulpit only on Sundays. They were out sharing the good news of Jesus all week long.

In our day and age, Christians have the same privilege and responsibility of evangelism. They are bound to their fellow humans by the ties of God’s family and by our Lord’s command, “*Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel.*” Thus, the assembly of believers, the Church, is a fellowship with a commission, i.e., the Great Commission!

Evangelism may involve finding and placing evangelists where there are no churches, setting up a multi-faceted media for missions outreach, and discovering mission outreaches in one’s own backyard.

No church can call itself a Christian church if it revolves only around its own axis. The church that lives for itself (its own institution) will die by itself.

Christ wants His Church to be a witnessing Church, an evangelistic Church; Christ wants you and me to be carriers of the “*Good News!*”

Proclamation of the Good News, the power of the Holy Spirit, Christian love, worship, unity, sincerity and evangelism were the essential characteristics of the New Testament Church. They were essential then, and they are essential now. G

*This message was delivered on Sunday, October 17, 2004, during the AMAA's Annual Meeting Worship Service at the Armenian Presbyterian Church of Paramus, NJ.

Summer Activities in Lebanon and Syria

Summer time is vacation time for people the world over, but for many families here in the Middle East there is little opportunity to escape the routine of their crowded cities. Through the efforts of the Christian Endeavor Union, and with the labors of youth and adults serving in Jesus' name, those less fortunate enjoyed a rich and varied summer, surrounded by nature and by the love of God delivered personally!

CONFERENCES IN LEBANON

CHILDREN AND YOUTH CAMPS

This year's Junior Youth Camp took place at the *Schneller* German boarding school, located in the Bekaa Valley. Fifty-nine teenagers (ages 13-17), along with 8 leaders were present. Miss Houri Barsoumian presented to them how they can "BE" a person of God, in five different areas of their life. The excitement and involvement of the teenagers was an encouraging sight for the leaders.

The Children's Camp was also held at the *Schneller* School. Twelve leaders cared for 100 children for a weeklong camp. Mrs. Houri Mousa Oghli of Aleppo, Syria spoke to the children on how to be "Witnesses for Christ". The unity and strong Christian commitment amongst the leaders was a key factor in the success of this camp, as they worked with the children, showing them how to put into practice what they were hearing.

Kessab's Kchag was the site for the Youth camp this year. The summer campsite in Syria was the perfect setting. This weeklong camp was attended by 100 youth from our churches in Lebanon, accompanied by nine leaders. The speaker was Pastor Vatche Ekmekjian, who spoke about topics such as "Am I here by chance, or by design?" and "There is a spiritual thirst in each of us that can be satisfied only by God."

The youth enjoyed the beauty of the Kessab area as they traveled down to the beach for an afternoon, and as they hiked up one of its mountains. During the week each person chose from a list of opportunities to serve the local community, whether



Children's Camp in Bekaa, Lebanon



Youth Camp (Lebanon) in Kchag - Kessab, Syria

sprucing up the campsite, visiting the elderly and shut-in, painting a room in the parsonage, cleaning the church, and so forth.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOLS

350 children, ages 8-12, attended Vac-

ation Bible Schools at our churches in Lebanon for a minimum of three weeks, at four different locations. At the Armenian Evangelical Church in Ashrafieh, "Creation" was presented through stations, where the children would learn the day's lesson through

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DVBS in Nor Amanos Church, Bourdj Hammoud, Lebanon



DVBS in Ashrafieh Church, Beirut, Lebanon

Bible stories, handcrafts, games, etc. The children also enjoyed a variety of outings, which included a visit to the Armenian Evangelical Emmanuel Church's VBS. The closing program was incorporated into the Sunday worship service of the church.

Ninety percent of the children attending the program at the Armenian Evangelical Church of Nor Marash came from non-Evangelical families. Each age group followed a different lesson plan, including "What Does God Do for Me?" "Learn God's Love," "What is Worship?" and "Searching for Values". Through the worship services the children were taught the meaning of obedience, entrusting your life to God, and how to trust God through His word and prayer. Amongst their outings the children visited Kchag, as well as the Bible Society's "Bible World".

The children at the Armenian Evangelical Emmanuel Church had an exciting VBS, learning the value of faith, thanksgiving, forgiveness, generosity, joy, patience, humility, hope, and most of all trust in God. The dedicated volunteers showed the children how to work with clay, bake and decorate sweets. They all watched educational videos and learned some basics about music. Their trips included a visit to the Armenian Evangelical School of Ainjar.

The children at the Armenian Evangelical Church in Ainjar learned that God is their Creator, and that they should use their bodies for the glory of God.

A NEW OUTREACH IN SANJAK CAMP

A group of 9 CE members from different



Children participating in DVBS in Nor Amanos Church, Bourdj Hammoud, Lebanon

churches had the unique opportunity to serve a group of 50 underprivileged children in "Sanjak Camp", a neighborhood where families are economically deprived, and housing is limited. The VBS setting was a first-time experience for these children. For many of them the idea of worship was a new one. They learned that God made them, and that He loves them unconditionally. They also learned about prayer. It was thrilling for the leaders to watch the children's enthusiasm during worship, and to see their delight with the knowledge that God knows and loves them personally. The leaders were all grateful to God for the opportunity to serve "the least of these". Seeds were planted that week, and all are looking forward

ward to returning to the camp in order to serve the Lord again. This was a program of outreach and evangelism to those in our neighborhood. The desire to continue this ministry is very strong among the youth.

YOUTH EXCHANGE AT KCHAG

It has been a little over two years since God has entrusted us with our Kchag summer campsite. With the efforts of the recently formed Trustees of Kchag, the CE Union was able to host a group of young people from the Alsace region of France representing the Action Chretienne en Orient. This 10-day camp was a good experience for both the visitors and the host youth, 24 in all. Our hope is that we will be able to host even

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larger groups at Kchag, and why not from our sister Unions?

COUPLES RETREAT-LEBANON

It was wonderful seeing sixteen couples (and their kids) coming together to hear what God had to say for their marital lives.

Mrs. Janine Sagherian, who had come from the States, shared with the group “The Ten Commandments for the Couples” topic. After the talks, the couples first met in small groups; and then as individual couples to discuss the study questions.

God revealed special needs that have to be addressed through the year and the couples made a commitment to attend the monthly sessions organized for them.

Once again, the importance of the couples' ministry was obvious, as God blessed the efforts in bringing the couples closer to each other, and to Him.

CONFERENCES IN SYRIA

The CE Union in Syria held three conferences this summer, in their summer camp Kchag located in Kessab, Syria. Sixty children attended the Children's camp. Mrs. Lena Ekmekjian presented to them studies on how to be “Like Jesus”.

Thirty-five members attended the Junior Youth Camp. Mrs. Maral Deyirmenjian was invited from Lebanon, and she challenged the faith of the junior youth by using the picture of a race. Three discussions were also presented to the youth, where they were challenged to think about Proper Etiquette, Turkish Music, and Proper Use of Money.

Forty youth attended the Youth Camp, where the speaker, Rev. Nerses Balabanian, challenged the group to search for new horizons and go to new depths in their faith life. During this four-day camp, the youth also heard presentations about Reality T.V. Shows and Modern Armenian Music.

Now that this busy summer is over, we have a chance to reflect on the many ways in which God led and strengthened us. We are grateful that the leaders as well as the youth experienced growth in faith and service. At the same time we are mindful of the invaluable assistance we have received from our partners in the Armenian Missionary Association, and we thank them and their many donors for encouraging us in our labor of love here in the Middle East.G



Children participating in DVBS in Ashrafieh, Beirut, Lebanon



Children's Camp (Syria) in Kchag - Kessab, Syria



Jr. Youth Camp (Lebanon & Syria) in Kchag - Kessab, Syria

4th Annual "Christmas In October" - Another Success

Elizabeth Aynilian

There may not have been snow on the ground or crowds at the malls or traffic on the highways, but there certainly was Christmas in October on Thursday, October 7, 2004. That's when the Summer Camp/Christmas Committee of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) held their 4th annual Christmas in October Luncheon and Silent Auction. Led by committee chairperson, Lucy Janjigian, and luncheon chairpersons, Lucienne Aynilian and Elbiz Baghdikian, the women on the committee worked tirelessly to gather beautiful objects and services to be auctioned off during the luncheon. All proceeds from the luncheon were to be used to make the Christmas of thousands of children in Armenia, Karabagh and Georgia a little brighter.

After everyone was given the opportunity to view the beautifully displayed tables and fellowship with friends, the program began with a welcome from Lucy Janjigian, with inspiring words about the work of the Committee. Mr. Andy Torigian, the President of the AMAA, then greeted the guests and announced that Lucy Janjigian had been recently named the National Chairman for the Summer Camp/Christmas Committee and that Lucienne Aynilian and Elbiz Baghdikian were named as her replacement Co-Chairpersons for the local committee. He was then followed by Lucienne Aynilian, who addressed the



Guests enjoying the "Christmas in October"

guests and made announcements about the Silent Auction. Rev. Berj Gulleyan of the Armenian Presbyterian Church of Paramus, offered a prayer, before everyone enjoyed a delicious lunch and continued to bid on their favorite items.

Louisa Janbazian, then made a Power-Point presentation, narrated by Elbiz Baghdikian, detailing the results of the hard work of the Summer Camp/Christmas Committee.

How many of us remember with fondness our summer camp and Christmas experiences from our own childhood? The AMAA's Summer Camp/Christmas Committee reaches



AMAA President Andy Torigian addressing the guests

thousands of children in the hope that they too may have similar memories. With the help of luncheons like Christmas in October and the continued tireless and inspiring work of the members of the committee, the children of Armenia will have similar memories. If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation in lieu of Christmas gift packages, please fill out the form and send it to the AMAA at 31 West Century Road, Paramus, NJ 07652. Your donation will bring a little cheer into the lives of Armenian orphans and needy children, and your act of love will help children of Armenia understand the meaning of Christmas. G



Yes, I would like to participate in the Armenia Summer Camp/Christmas Committee's fundraiser for **Christmas Joy Packages** and bring some cheer into the lives of thousands of orphans and needy children in Armenia, Georgia and Karabagh.

Enclosed please find my donation of US dollars_____.

Name _____

Address _____

(Make your tax-deductible checks payable to AMAA, earmarked for Christmas Joy Packages and mail to 31 W. Century Road, Paramus, NJ 07652)

Melania Keghamian of Avedisian School in Yerevan Receives the Outstanding Principal of the Year Award by Armenia's Minister of Education and Sciences

On October 1, 2004, on the occasion of the Teacher's Day, The Republic of Armenia's Minister of Education and Sciences organized a program in the Arno Babajanian Hall in Yerevan to honor all the teachers of Armenia. Present were the representatives and members of the Ministry of Education, the representatives of the City and District councils, principals and educators.

Bishop Navasard Gejoyan, the representative of the Ararat Diocese, conveyed the greetings and the congratulations of His Holiness Karekin II.

Mr. Serko Yeritzian, the minister of the Republic of Armenia's Education and Sciences, in his speech said. "Being a teacher is first a calling and then a duty... On the occasion of Teacher's Day, I convey my best wishes to all the teachers of Armenia. In all the prevailing social and economical circumstances, you have remained faithful to your mission and have kept your high calling to be a teacher and have built the schools that we all wish to have..."

During the Program, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, Mr. Antranig Markarian, congratulated all those who were present on the occasion of the Teacher's Day Ceremony and presented the best teachers of the year with awards. At the end, Minister Serko Yeritzian, awarded Mrs. Melania Keghamian of the Armenian Evangelical Avedisian School of Yerevan, with the gold medal of the Ministry of Education, for her high achievements in the educational area, for her many years of dedicated services as educator and for her performance as the most outstanding principal of the year.

The Khoren & Shoushanig Avedisian School is the first Armenian Evangelical School in Yerevan, Armenia, which was founded by the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) in May 1999. The Avedisian School has been one of the most important contributions of the AMAA to the people in the homeland. The school serves in one of the poorest areas in the south-west district of Yerevan, known as the



Melania Keghamian (center) with Pamela and Edward Avedisian

Malatya-Sebastia section. AMAA Board member Mr. Edward Avedisian and his wife Pamela of Lexington, MA are the sponsors of this school.G

REV. DR. MANUEL JINBACHIAN AWARDED BY CATHOLICOS KAREKIN II

On Wednesday, July 14, 2004, His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of all Armenians, honored the Rev. Dr. Manuel Jinbachian with the medal of St. Sahag and St. Mesrop at the Holy See of Etchmiadzin, Armenia. The award was granted to Rev. Jinbachian for the twenty years of service to the Mother Church in the translation of the Bible into Eastern Armenian. The first time Rev. Jinbachian visited Etchmiadzin was in 1984 to lead a translation seminar and since then he has followed closely the translation of the Bible as the United Bible Society's (UBS) translation consultant (TC), and later as the Europe Regional Translation Coordinator (RETCO). His Holiness, in his speech, appreciated the work carried out by Rev. Jinbachian and highlighted his dedicated service to the Armenian Church throughout the past twenty years.

Rev. Jinbachian is an ordained minister of the Armenian Evangelical Church. He received his primary and secondary education at the Armenian Evangelical Central High School and graduated from the Near East School of Theology. He continued his studies at Oxford University in England where he received his B. Litt. Degree from the faculty of Theology in 1973, and his Ph. D. in Theology at the Université des Sciences Humaines de Strasbourg, France, in 1989. He worked as professor and Dean at Haigazian College, now University, from 1973-1979. He joined the UBS as translation consultant in 1979 and became the coordinator for all the translation projects in Europe, 1989-2001. In 2001, Rev. Jinbachian was invited to Montreal, Quebec, Canada to establish a special chair in collaboration with McGill University and Université de Montréal, to teach Bible Translation as an academic discipline and prepare translation consultants for the work of Bible Translation. Currently, he is teaching at the above-mentioned universities. He has written two books and a number of articles published in scholarly journals.G



Family Retreat of The Armenian Evangelical Church in Greece

Zarouhie Tokatlian

The Armenian Evangelical Church in Greece held its seventh annual retreat at Kalamos on September 10, 11 and 12. The Rev. Vicken Cholakian, aided by his family and several adults and young people, worked with faith and vision in planning and preparing an outstanding three-day program.

The guest speaker was the Rev. Nishan Bakalian, Chaplain of Haigazian University.

The theme of this year's retreat was "Fake or Genuine" which was intended to throw light on the congruity of a true Christian's inner qualities and behavior with his or her external expression. The topic was presented in 4 sessions. There were three discussion groups, each led by the Rev. Bakalian, the Rev. Cholakian and the group of the young people was led by Violetta and Tamar.

The discussion encompassed the challenges that a Christian has to face in a world that often measures success by judging from appearances rather than reality. Nevertheless, remaining steadfast in one's faith and belief in a life of service to others, particularly for the result rather than the impression, brings inner renewal and the strength to press on.

The presence of the children and young people added an especially happy note to the retreat experience. Their happy songs, dramas, talent shows, and, in the spirit of the Athens 2004 Olympiad, their games made us all exuberant.

The closing of the retreat was a time of introspection and gratitude for the blessings and the wonderful fellowship we had enjoyed as a church family.

We are grateful for the support of the AMAA in our church activities. G



Praise & Worship time during the Family Retreat



Participants in the Family Retreat - Rev. Vicken & Salpi Cholakian (first row left), Rev. Nishan Bakalian (second row left)

UPDATE

85TH ANNUAL MEETING AND RELATED ACTIVITIES OF THE AMAA

As scheduled, the 85th Annual Meeting of the AMAA took place on Saturday, October 16, 2004, at 9:00 am, at the AMAA Headquarters. The Annual Banquet was held on the same day, in the evening at 7:00 pm, followed by a Musical Concert. A one-day Missions Seminar was also held on Friday, October 15, 2004.

On Sunday, October 17, during the 85th Annual Meeting Worship Service at the Armenian Presbyterian Church of Paramus, NJ, the following new elected AMAA Board members were announced:

H. Steven Aharonian, M.D.
Rafi Balabanian, D.D.S.
Bryan Bedrosian

Nazareth Darakjian, M.D.
Elaine Kasparyan
Harold Nahigian

Eileen Chopourian Stephey, Ph.D.
Carlos Taraktzian
Joe Zeronian, Ed.D.

The details of the 85th Annual Meeting of the AMAA will be featured in the next issue of the AMAA News.

BOOK NOTICE**REV. DR. VAHAN TOOTIKIAN'S "FROM A PASTOR'S DESK / Մ ՀԱՅԱՑՔԵԴԵՆ..."**

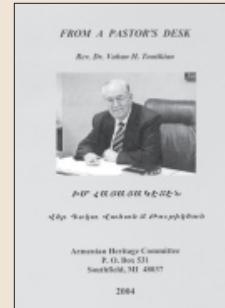
*This bilingual book, **From A Pastor's Desk / Im Hayatzakéden**, is Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian's 26th book. The author, a widely known scholar, prolific writer and community leader, is the minister of the Armenian Congregational Church of Greater Detroit and the Executive Director of the Armenian Evangelical World Council. The book, which contains 57 articles, thirty-five in English and twenty-two in Armenian, presents articles which deal with religious, patriotic, cultural and social topics, examined primarily from a religious perspective...*

Dr. Tootikian approaches the Word of God with the anticipation of finding new treasures through deeper digging because he believes that the mine of biblical truths has not been depleted. Although in this book he tackles subjects and topics about which many volumes have been written, he still manages to extract some extraordinary gems that others have failed to notice...

*At a time of spiritual decline, how refreshing it is to come across such a book like **From A Pastor's Desk** that preserves the integrity of the Gospel, and does not make the slightest attempt to gloss over or dilute its moral imperatives...*

**Rev. Kevork (George) Terian
Chairman, Publications Committee - AEUNA**

Copies of the above book can be obtained from the Armenian Heritage Committee - POBox 531, Southfield, MI 48037. The cost of the book is \$25.00 plus shipping and handling \$2.50.

**AVAILABLE FROM AMAA
BOOK SERVICE PROGRAM****VIEWS ON GOOD NEWS
365 Inspiring Daily Devotions for Christian Living**
by Asien Surmeian

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Ron Tovmassian, Senior pastor, United Armenian Congregational Church, Los Angeles, CA.



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WANTED INFORMATION ABOUT THE LIFE & MINISTRY OF REV. DR. SAMUEL HALAJIAN

If you have any information please send to Rev. Vahan Tootikian, POBox 531, Southfield, MI 48037 - Tel. (248) 352-0680

PUBLICATIONS

AMAA BOOK SERVICE PROGRAM

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REV. DR. MOVSES B. JANBAZIAN - MAN OF VISION WITH A MISSION, Depicts the life and excerpts from the works of Rev. Janbazian, the past Executive Director of the AMAA, who dedicated his entire life to God and the Armenian People. His writings are a testament to his dedication. 278 pp., hc. No.304 - Complimentary - a donation may be sent	
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CDs & TAPES

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OUR ARMENIAN CHRISTIAN HERITAGE, by Rev. Dr. G. H. Chopourian, 122 pp, pb, No. 50a

THE ARMENIAN EVANGELICAL CHURCH, by Vahan H. Tootikian, 322, pp, pb, No. 92b

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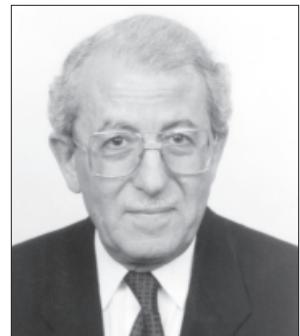
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The AMAA Board of Directors and staff wish to extend their heartfelt condolences to the families of the following deceased friends whose names were submitted to us for publication in the AMAA News.

* **Angell, Victoria**
Providence, RI

* **Bezjian, Rosik**
Westminster, CA

* **Bertot Helen**
Alexandria, VA

* **Brown Palmer, Nancie**
Ridgewood, NJ

* **Esralian, Sarah**
Allen, TX

Gulesserian, Puzant
San Jose, CA

Kalenian, Margaret
Westboro, MA

* **Koshgarian, Zaroohi**
Providence, RI

* **Margosian, Alice**
W. Bloomfield, MI

* **Minaesian, Artavazd**
Sacramento, CA

* **Nahigian, Gertrude**
Mission Viejo, CA

* **Nanian, Martin**
FL

* **Sahakian, Albert G**
MI

* **Sepetjian, Alice**
Watertown, MA

OBITUARIES

Sarah Whit Esralian

Sarah W. Esralian, age 77, of Allen, TX was born on Feb. 28, 1927, in Chambersville, TX to P. Otto & Catherine (Blackwell) Loftice. She met Charles Jim Esralian during the Second World War and they married on July 12, 1945, in McKinney, TX. They moved to Pontiac, MI where they lived for thirty years before retiring to Allen, TX.



Mrs. Esralian was a homemaker of the Presbyterian faith. Sarah married into an Armenian family 59 years ago and lived for several years with her Armenian in-laws, Harotoun and Marie Esralian, both survivors of the genocide. Sarah quickly adopted the Armenian culture and language and soon became an accomplished cook of many Armenian foods. She learned to speak Armenian and understood everything her in-laws were saying. Sarah taught Sunday School at Joslyn Avenue Presbyterian Church in Pontiac for over 20 years. She was also a Church Deacon and taught Special Education for 8 years at LeBaron Elementary School in Pontiac. The most important things in her life were God, family and teaching others. She was a person of strong Christian faith and all of her cook books and personal writings are filled with Bible verses and religious sayings.

At her High School in McKinney, TX she graduated as Salutatorian of her class in 1943 and won a district typing contest for speed and accuracy. The Speaker of the House in Texas noticed her skills and offered her an appointment in Washington DC but she declined the offer. Instead, she soon met and married Charles.

Sarah labored in the hospital for 3 weeks before her passing, following major surgery, but never complained. Sarah went home to her Lord and Savior on August 10, 2004 in Plano, Texas.

She is survived by her husband, Charles Jim Esralian of Allen, TX; children, Charles Whit Esralian and wife, Charlene of Clarkston, MI, Michael Jim Esralian and wife, Shirley of Aloha, OR and Gary Paul Esralian of Allen, TX; 3 grandchildren, a step granddaughter, 2 great grandchildren, 4 sisters, 1 brother and many nieces, nephews and special friends. G

Rev. Artavazd Minaesian

The Rev. Artavazd Minaesian, a minister who attended to the needs of the Los Angeles Armenian community for more than 40 years died peacefully in his Sacramento home on Monday, August 23 surrounded by his wife and immediate family. He was 87.

His wife of 51 years Sirpouhi (Sue), a son Daniel and his wife Anna, three daughters Maryann Hodgson and her husband John, Sonya Wilson and her husband Martin and Leonya Beegan and her husband Chris, survive the Rev. Minaesian. He leaves seven grandchildren, Jessica, J., Robby, Peter, David, Jack and Jimmy. All family members reside in the Sacramento area.

An active leader in the Greater Los Angeles Armenian community since 1951, Rev. Minaesian was the Pastor of the Armenian Immanuel Congregational Church for nine years. He completed his active ministry as the Pastor of Armenian Pentecostal Church of Montebello where he served for 28 years until his retirement in 1988. In addition to his ministry, the Rev. Minaesian was an adult education teacher in the Montebello School District teaching English as a second language to the region's growing Armenian immigrant community.

The Rev. Minaesian immigrated to the United States from Calcutta, India in 1947 at the age of 31 to attend the Central Bible Institute and Seminary in Springfield, MO where he received his Bachelor of Arts degree and teaching credentials. His early education was at the Armenian College Boarding School in India where he graduated in 1934 followed by two years at Calcutta University.

It was while he was a student at the Armenian College that Rev. Minaesian said that "he gave his heart to the Lord" and began a ministry marked by his tireless work in tending to the flock of his Brothers and Sisters in Christ. His was a preaching style reminiscent of an old-timed revivalist, his voice thundered as he extorted his parishioners to "trust in the Lord to fulfill their needs". Modern-day approaches to problem solving were unnecessary, according to Rev. Minaesian. All one needed was an unswerving faith and belief in the power of prayer and petition to a God who loves us above all else. Indeed he did more than talk the talk; truly, he walked the walk, sporting a lapel pin on his suit coat with the two words of advice that were at the core of his convictions, "Ask God".

Rev. Minaesian was born October 20, 1916 in Upper Kunark, Iran. As a young boy he lived with his family in the oil fields of Syria

and Iraq before attending boarding school at the Armenian College in India. A standout student and accomplished athlete, young Artavazd was a championship swimmer, member of the Armenian All India Rugby Team and a light-heavy weight boxer. He was active in the Armenian nationalist movement and scouting, attaining the rank of Rover Scout.

Services for the late Rev. Minaesian were held on August 26, 2004 at East Lawn Mortuary in Sacramento, CA. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Armenian Missionary Association of America, 31 West Century Road, Paramus, NJ 07652. G

Helen Bertot

Helen Demirjian Bertot passed away August 17, 2004 from complications caused by a ruptured ulcer at Inova Alexandria Hospital. She was 77.

Born in New York City, Helen was a pioneer guided by her sense of duty, faith and devotion to family. An only child of Armenian immigrants forced to leave Turkey during the Armenian genocide, she broke away from tradition in the 1950s by working for a travel agency and leading some of the first tours to Europe and the Middle East.

Her next adventure was joining the Foreign Service in 1954 and serving in Beirut and then Genoa, where she met and married Foreign Service Officer Joseph Bertot. In accord with regulations at the time, Helen was required to resign from the Foreign Service after marriage. Following her resignation in 1959 she accompanied Joe to assignments in Bolivia, Mexico, Libya, Italy (twice), Chile and The Netherlands for a career spanning 30 years with the U.S. Information Agency. Helen was an active participant in the FS and both Joe and Helen were wonderful cooks. She spoke Armenian, Turkish, Italian, Spanish and some Arabic but never lost her Brooklyn accent.

In 1982, Joe and Helen moved to Alexandria, VA. A founding member of Alexandria's Sister City Committee with Gyumri, Armenia, she started the Armenian festival which has been held in Market Square in May for the past 12 years to raise funds for young earthquake victims and cultural exchanges. Joseph Bertot died in 1990. She is survived by her children, Jemile, a Foreign Service Officer married to Edward Ramotowski and John Carlo, a professor at Florida State University married to Robin and five grandchildren (Emily, Sarah and Helen Bertot and David and Stephen Ramotowski). G

GIVING THANKS AT YEAR-END

"God loves a Cheerful giver." (II Cor. 9:7)

There is no better time to thank God and give cheerfully than during this Holiday Season and before the end of the year. Careful planning today can help enjoy the cheerfulness of giving tomorrow. Here are some helpful hints.

What Can We Give? - Giving Cash

Gifts in the form of cash or through checks are the most common methods of charitable giving. All gifts to the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) delivered or mailed by December 31, qualify for tax deduction for 2004, and bring cheer not only to the giver, but also renewed hope to thousands of people who depend on our giving. Please be as generous as you can and give as liberally as God (the source of all gifts) commands.

Appreciated Property - Giving Securities

Stocks, bonds and mutual funds that have increased in value can bring extra tax savings for 2004. Not only the donor will enjoy the tax deduction for the fair market value of the gift, but will also bypass capital gains tax that would otherwise be due if the securities were sold.

Giving Through A Will Or Living Trust

The end of the year is also a good time to review long-range estate and financial planning. Giving through wills, living trusts, life insurance policies and retirement accounts will offer great opportunities for leaving a lasting legacy to charitable interests.

Endowment Funds

Gifts and bequests can be used to establish endowment funds in the name of the donor or someone the donor wishes to honor. These endowment funds are invested by the AMAA and the income is used to support designated purposes of the donor as part of the worldwide outreach of the AMAA.

There are many ways you can make your giving meaningful and cheerful. Planning and timing are essential. Just take a moment and think what your giving today will mean for you and for others tomorrow. God will bless you abundantly.

For additional information on giving and estate planning please write or call in confidence to the Executive Director of the:

Armenian Missionary Association of America
31 W. Century Road
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Tel. (201) 265-2607

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